

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 111 484

JC 750 508

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TITLE Planning for a Regional Learning Resources Service:
An Exploratory Document.
INSTITUTION Chicago City Colleges, Ill. Learning Resources
Lab..
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Planning; Financial Support;
Instructional Improvement; *Instructional Materials
Centers; Instructional Media; *Instructional
Technology; *Interinstitutional Cooperation; *Junior
Colleges; Metropolitan Areas; Regional Planning;
Shared Services

ABSTRACT

An instrument was designed to elicit a direct reaction from colleagues as to the issues involved in the development of a metropolitan learning resource service. Sets of questions and items lay out the broadest range of functions, services, organization, governance, and funding which are feasible for such a service. It is assumed that any metropolitan learning resources service should: (1) complement and supplement the services performed by campus learning resource centers; (2) provide services not normally found on most community college campuses; (3) be a vehicle for cooperation between institutions, including the non-formal institutions of education such as museums and libraries; (4) require the active participation and financial cooperation of the institutions involved; (5) offer ways of reducing the costs of relevant goods and services to participants by increasing the scale of purchases; (6) serve as a clearinghouse for various kinds of information related to learning resources and the improvement of instruction; (7) be affiliated formally or informally with other similar services throughout the country in order to maintain a leadership role in evaluating new instructional strategies. It is expected that the 12 stimulus questions will lead to a clearer formulation of crucial and significant issues. (Author/NHM)

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PLANNING FOR A REGIONAL LEARNING RESOURCES SERVICE:
AN EXPLORATORY DOCUMENT

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The changes occurring in post-secondary education in America and the Chicago metropolitan region have led to an exploration of the idea of a metropolitan learning resources service. This initial search has been funded by a grant from the Illinois Community College Board to the Learning Resources Laboratory of the City Colleges of Chicago. We have found no ready model for the kind of educational service which appears necessary and desirable. We have some preliminary ideas at this stage but find it desirable to receive a direct reaction from our colleagues and others concerned about the future needs for learning resources services for serving the adults and institutions in the Chicago region.

The following sets of questions and items try to lay out the broadest range of functions, services, organization, governance, and funding which are feasible for such a service. While this format is similar to a questionnaire, it is intended more to stimulate your thinking. Your expected response is not so much to specific questions as it is to the issues involved with developing a metropolitan learning resources service. Your own experience and background will lead you to answering the specific questions posed here but then you will likely react to them and ask other questions. Note what your own questions are since they will probably raise the crucial and significant issues in a more meaningful way than these stimulus questions.

The assumptions made about any metropolitan learning resources service include the following:

- *it should complement and supplement the services performed by campus learning resource centers.

- *it should provide services not normally found on most community college campuses and many other post-secondary institutions.

- *it should be a vehicle for cooperation between institutions including the non-formal institutions of education such as museums and libraries.

*it should require the active participation and financial cooperation of the institutions.

*it should offer ways of reducing the costs of relevant goods and services to participants by increasing the scale of purchases.

*it should serve as a clearinghouse for various kinds of information related to learning resources and the improvement of instruction.

*it should be affiliated formally or informally with other similar services throughout the country in order to maintain a leadership role in evaluating new instructional strategies.

1. The following functions and services are primarily concerned with assisting the instructional resources units on individual campuses through regional support. Are these functions and services relevant for your institution? Are they better offered by your institution on its own rather than from a regional service where you have membership? Would there be cost-benefit gains for your institution using a regional service rather than your institution performing the service itself? Would there be cost-effective gains?

Function

Service Examples

Consumer

Central purchasing of selected media hardware, materials, software, and services after evaluation and comparative shopping. Preliminary testing before purchase of major acquisitions. Specification of design improvements as condition of purchase.

Technical services

Central processing of print and non-print acquisitions.

Computer services

Central computer services for a variety of data keeping functions. Central service for catalog of print and non-print materials held by regional institutions; reservations and bookkeeping of inter-library loans.

Library

Central acquisition and distribution of expensive, seldom used resources--films, videotaped courses, etc.

Production

Duplication, original production, and specialized production of various instructional media too expensive for single institutions to undertake. Production facilities on a serve-yourself basis where institutions have the expertise but not the facilities for expensive production, especially television.

- Archival** Central archive for audio and audiovisual records of significant educational events in the region not associated with member institutions. Clearinghouse for archival materials holdings in region.
- In-service training** Workshops for staff and administrators in specialized topics. On-the-job training for specialists (graphic artists, media technicians, engineers for FCC licensed facilities, etc.). Arrangement for specialized courses for faculty for graduate credit through universities in region.
- Research & evaluation** Instructional research and evaluation of media, instructional development activities and other activities of LRC units. Cooperative arrangements for research with graduate schools in region. Evaluation consultants for funded projects of member institutions.
- Maintenance** Preventative maintenance and emergency maintenance of older and nonwarranted equipment. Temporary loan arrangement between institutions with similar equipment.
- Planning** Consultation arranged with other institutions in region and elsewhere on facilities design, new buildings, new programs, anticipation of changing educational needs, etc.
- Linkage & liaison** Basis for institutional cooperation within region on variety of projects and programs. Development of linkages outside geographic area for possible exchanges of materials, course development, cooperative ventures in course production, etc.
- Funding agency** Consortia are receiving favorable funding for projects and serve to strengthen members' efforts to receive grants.
- Special groups** Citizens not normally serviced by campus LRCs could be served by a regional service. These citizens include the handicapped, elderly, prison inmates, mental institution inmates, etc.
- Consultant service** Local LRC personnel would form basis for an LRC consulting group for the region and elsewhere. Professional development would be enhanced and promoted by orientation beyond the local setting.
- Personnel** Increasing importance of local LRCs will require more and better staffing for LRC activity. Regional service would serve as recruiting agency and placement service for para-professional and specialist staff.

2. The functions and services below are primarily concerned with improving the learning opportunities for students. Are they currently available for your students? Are they relevant for your students? Are they better offered by a regional service or your own institution alone? Are they services which students should have access to?

<u>Function</u>	<u>Service Examples</u>
Course choices	Selection of basic courses across institutions which can be fitted to the student's need. Initial testing, prescription of entry point into course, learning modules with variety of instructional modes, proficiency examination when course completed on self-paced time-line.
Institutional articulation	Acts as course selection clearinghouse to minimize difficulties and financial penalties for taking courses at colleges other than "home" campus.
Self-paced instruction	Develops and distributes learning modules for campus-based or home-based instruction which are either in an auto-tutorial mode using CAI or slide/tape. These allow greater flexibility of instruction and hopefully more depth of understanding than conventional instruction.
Broadcast instruction	Radio and open, cable, and ITFS television offer a paced form of instruction for home and study center location which can serve large numbers of the population for an equivalent cost of conventional instruction on enrollment basis--cheaper on a total viewer basis. Appropriate for the handicapped, infirm, full time worker, etc.
Counseling	For the home student and those working at their own pace, active counseling is necessary as contrasted with the office-chair counseling on campus where students can drop in. With students enrolled simultaneously in several colleges, counseling for adults requires a different approach.
Credit-for-experience	Whole new approaches to credit must be examined in the future since the "open learner" argues that his or her previous experience was academically valuable. A regional service of necessity would provide guidelines for institutions on this topic and assist the student in finding institutions which are open learning oriented.

Learning styles

Both cognitive and affective learning styles are receiving consideration in determining the type of instruction which might be appropriate for individual learners. Research in this area is liable to be concentrated on typical students. Exploration by the regional service would assure that all groups served by its members would benefit from this approach to designing instruction.

Study centers

Off-campus study centers such as in factories, offices, and libraries might be coordinated by the regional service since these would normally be associated with broadcast instruction or other use of televised or radio instruction. Liaison with campus LRCs would facilitate transition of students to campus courses.

Student projects

The regional service would provide access to its services for students working on projects requiring facilities beyond the scope of one institution. Research use of computers, special production equipment (time lapse filmings, for instance), etc. could be made available.

3. The services used as examples below focus on the improvement of teaching and "the management of instruction" by faculty members. The term 'management' suggests a different role in the instructional process for faculty members as self-paced, modular approaches are developed. The role of the regional service in this area might be to provide liaison between institutions and the development of courses and workshops which introduce faculty members to seeing their changing and expanding roles. Do you see the services below as relevant for your institution? Are you currently involved in such services? Could they be offered by a regional service in addition to your own institution? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Function

Service Examples

Up-dating

Organizing subject matter-oriented instructional development workshops--possibly interinstitutional to afford economy of scale and cross-fertilization of ideas. Local LRCs would be involved in planning and followup; regional service would coordinate efforts of several institutions.

Course development

Courses heavy on audiovisual and/or CAI are often prohibitive for a single institution to develop. Regional service would provide logistical and consultant services for interinstitutional course development so that costs can be divided over a number of participating institutions.

- Clearinghouse** As new courses and innovative practices take place within the region and elsewhere, the regional service would report on them and provide coverage in a research-oriented newsletter. The regional service might also focus on developing professional organizations and contacts within the region.
- Media use** Materials and outlines for workshops on the use of media for faculty members could be provided by the regional service to the LRC units. The materials production would probably be a co-operative effort of the LRC leadership.
- Measurement** Examinations and grading will remain on the scene for many years to come. The need for better student measurement and evaluation will increase. Workshops for the faculty could be provided by the regional service utilizing local measurement experts.
- Printing/Copyright clearance** Offprints of articles could be printed for use within the region. The copyright clearance procedures and negotiations could be conducted by the regional learning resources service.
- Computer services** Faculty members can be expected to make greater and more diverse use of computers in the future. Research and innovative teaching will lean more and more on sophisticated software and advanced hardware which may not be available at single institutions. The regional service could provide a time-sharing system for both administrative, instructional, and research needs.
- Library** A computer-based inter-library loan, reservation, and delivery system would be feasible if done on a regional basis. Both faculty and students would have access to not only their own institution's collection but public and large institutional libraries as well. A regional service would facilitate planning and the preliminary development of such a system.
- Exchange** A regional learning resources service would encourage greater faculty contact across institutional boundaries. Visiting experts, speakers, field trips, and research activity could be shared. Telelectures and greater use of remote, telephonic devices might be tried.

5. The governing and management structure of a regional learning resources service could take many different forms. Certainly not all of the services and functions listed previously would emerge all at once. A broad regional service might develop from a modest beginning by homogeneous institutions which expand upon a base of one or two functions. Or the initial organization might be based on heterogeneous institutions which share certain deficiencies and wish to correct them by cooperative action. The following items are suggestive of the different possible policy-making arrangements. Which would be the best arrangement from your perspective? Is there another arrangement not included here which would be more desirable?

Type

Characteristics

Informal

Non-incorporated consortium with activities paid for on project-by-project basis or minimum contribution from participants. No permanent staff; minimum red tape; projects undertaken and services rendered based on little or no expense; large in-kind contribution from each institution.

Self-supporting cooperative

Legally incorporated cooperative with ongoing services decided by members and paid for by equal shares or per service charge. Minimal staff; large in-kind contributions; perhaps pilot group for later, more elaborate cooperative (similar to NILRC).

Subsidized cooperative

As above with addition of state subsidy or local assessment based on flat rate or headcount. Permanent staff including executive director who actively seeks outside funds for specific projects. Membership determines priorities; delegates tasks among themselves and staff.

Contract

One or two member institutions assume responsibilities for organizing regional service for membership who form advisory and policy board. Contract is drawn up for provision of services. Funding is from state and/or member institutions who receive certain number and kind of services for their contribution. Projects are farmed out to member institutions on sub-contract basis as need arises. Eventually, regional service becomes self-sustaining and splits away from instigating contractual institution(s) to become separate entity.

State

The state sets up regional service from its own funds and operates the service with the advice of an advisory board for the region. A regional network is established which allows interchange of services, materials, etc. Membership is

automatic for state and public institutions; contribution may be required of private institutions-- in cash or kind. Sophisticated services undertaken. May sub-contract with institutions for provision of various services for regional use.

6. As you can see, the organizational problems of a regional service for learning resources cannot be downgraded. A primary issue in forming a regional service would be the membership. The following are examples of possible groups which would comprise the initial membership in a regional service. Which mixture of groups do you feel would have the best chances for success? Which mixture would your institution feel most comfortable in belonging to? Which would be least comfortable? Are there other groups which are not included below which you would see as potential members?

Institutional groups

two year public colleges
two year private colleges
(typical community and junior colleges)
four year public colleges
four year private colleges
(liberal arts, small enrollments)
public universities
private universities
(diverse curricula, student bodies, tuition, etc.)
informal educational institutions: public
informal educational institutions: private
(museums, libraries, zoos, arboreta, etc.)

government training groups
(police academy, etc.)

hospitals and health education groups
(including public health services)

consumer education and extension services
(government supported)

adult education and skills: public support
(often under a board of education or commercial college)

adult education and skills: private
(YMCA, YWCA, Red Cross, etc.)

proprietary and private correspondence schools
(limited curricula)

vocational and technical training schools: public
vocational and technical training schools: private
(comprehensive curricula)

industrial and commercial training divisions
(banks, insurance companies, Ill. Bell, etc.)

television and radio stations: public broadcast; educational
television and radio stations: commercial
CATV companies
ITFS services operated by educational agencies

religious organizations: non-denominational activity
religious organizations: denominational activity

7. The extent and organizational nature of the regional service would suggest the nature of the funding. As a specific issue, the following funding options (and combinations) are possible. How would you evaluate these options in terms of practicality; initial funding vs. long term funding method, and attractiveness to the sources supplying the funds (i.e., potential funding agency response to the option).

<u>Source</u>	<u>Funding characteristic</u>
members	internal funding through membership self-assessment on an equal share basis--single membership fee
members	as above but divided on basis other than equal share--head count, percentage of institutional budget, etc.
members	as above but different levels of membership reflecting degree of use of regional services; allows variety of institutions to participate
members	basic membership fee as above with additional charges related to services used; basic fee guarantees minimum level of services for period of time (workshops, computer time, use of broadcast courses, etc.)
members + state	basic fee, service fees, and subsidy from state to support personnel, rent, broadcast time, etc.
state + user fees	state provides a basic subsidy with fees for certain services provided by users; subsidy based on flat grant or head count formula
state + user fees	state provides funds for specific projects and services; members pay membership and user fees
state only	state funds entire regional service with charges for certain materials and services on subsidized rate.

- federal, + other various options above plus funding from federal government under specific proposals
- self-supporting after initial beginning, regional service becomes self-supporting by marketing software and services on a pay-as-you-go basis; membership pays user fees and reduced amount for some but not all services
- self-supporting + grants foundation, government, and user fees are mixed for supplying variety of services and specific projects
- contributions initial funding from members followed by contributions from commerce and industry to provide either specific services or as general floor
- contractual regional service contracts with variety of institutions to provide minimum services or specific services as production unit, consultants, etc.; retainers are paid by participating institutions

(Note: An issue of some importance is keeping the budget of the local LRC intact and not having a regional service developed at the expense of local operations. The line item which might cover a regional service development could be "outside services and contracts" in the academic services part of an institution's budget.)

8. Suggested in several of the preceding items is the question of policy formation for the regional service. The following are examples of policy forming methods. Which do you see as most promising for initial development? Which are least acceptable? Are there other methods you would suggest?

*As in cooperative arrangement, each institution is represented on an equal share basis for setting policy and sharing responsibilities for decisions. Coordinator selected from members to act as an executive for carrying out activities. Policy board would meet often; if large (more than 10?), committees would function on certain issues and activities of the service.

*Regional service has an executive director. Policy board meets on regular but not necessarily frequent basis to set policy and review activities. Less involved in day-to-day activities than first alternative.

*Broad policy and advisory function retained by member institutions but executive director is given more authority than in above. He/she can hire and fire staff, seek funding, initiate projects, etc.

*Policy is set by a board of directors selected by member institutions but not necessarily including all institutions in the board (appropriate for large membership). Size of board would be small, meet often, and be active in all affairs of the service.

*State appoints a director who initiates an advisory board. Advisory group has limited power and serves more to define goals and direction of the regional service for benefit of the director.

*State (possibly IBHE) appoints board from the region to set policy and hire director to administer the service which is funded by the state.

*Where single institution contracts to perform services, a policy board is set up to oversee contract and provide broad policy and goals. Contract holder controls hiring and firing of staff, expenditure of funds, etc.

9. While physical facilities and location are determined by many of the issues included in preceding items, consideration of the type of housing, placement in the region, and leasing arrangements has the effect of focusing attention on the first steps in developing a regional learning resources service. Your own experience with centralized services might suggest pitfalls related to location and facilities. The following examples are intended to stimulate your thinking on this issue. What do you feel should be the location of the regional service? What is an unsuitable location? What type of facilities should be initially obtained? What kind of leasing or other arrangements would be appropriate?

Location

On a member's campus which is central to other members.

Near to the transportation hub of the members' locations--perhaps in a building near intersecting expressways.

Operating out of a small office but using a van containing needed supplies and hardware and rotating between members; using existing members' facilities when possible; and leasing other services as necessary (computers, TV equipment and studios, etc.). This is appropriate for services which are "facilitated" by a regional learning resources service and is predominantly liaison in nature (in-service workshops, instructional development, research, etc.) which require on-location work. Energy shortage could be a problem.

Downtown Chicago location. Phone, facsimile, telex, or other immediate communication system would maintain contact with institutions. The location in downtown Chicago would be appropriate for emphasis on purchasing, broadcast services, bilingual and

ethnic oriented services (second language dubbing of videocassettes, films, etc.). It would be geographically central for Chicago city institutions and for those to the north and south. If little direct connection with institutions is required, other than by telecommunication, a Loop location has certain logistical advantages. Disadvantages are large and well-known.

Type of facility and arrangement

On-campus office with access to host member's LRC and other campus facilities. Rented, nominally rented, or donated space.

Commercial office facility. Leased on commercial terms.

Former family dwelling converted to offices and leased from government. Donated, purchased, or leased.

Purchased modular building placed on rented or donated space on a member institution's land.

Converted facilities--warehouse, storefront, etc. Leased or purchased.

Dispersed services operated from different on-campus locations and integral with member institutions. Space donated.

Government office building or other government-owned facilities. Leased or donated.

Commercial or industrial member's space donated to the regional service.

Small office base and mobile van travelling between members. Donated space and leased van.

10. A central principle of the regional learning resources service would be undertaking services which single institutions find too expensive, complex, and which overlap with other institutions. A primary example is open broadcast instructional television and radio. At the present time, broadcast ITV in the Chicago region is limited to courses offered by the City Colleges of Chicago and one for teachers through Northern Illinois University. The trends in post-secondary education today point toward greater attention to adult learning through a variety of approaches. Both broadcast radio and television could play a stronger part in serving the adults in the Chicago metropolitan region. If an FM radio station and a UHF television channel (WXXW, Channel 20) were programmed on a regional basis, a powerful adult education service could be developed when linked with campus-based learning. Programs for broadcast could be used as learning modules on the campus for direct and supplementary instruction. The following indicate other uses and spin-offs of a regional service providing ITV and

and radio programming as well as arguments against a regional service getting involved in such programming. What are your reactions to this issue? Would you see your institution active in collaborating in production--either through instructional development and direct production and/or usage and credit granting to television and radio students? What other issues arise which are not included below? Would you want to get involved in broadcasting for public service in your institution's specialties? Would you want to program for the specific geographic area you serve?

Uses, advantages, spin-offs from instructional TV/Radio

- *service to citizens often not served by conventional campus instruction throughout region--particularly the homebound woman, institutionalized citizens, and full-time workers with changing work schedules

- *regional service increases numbers served, keeps institutional costs to minimum by cooperative programming, and allows individuals and institutions realistic option to campus-only instruction

- *non-credit, specialty courses and programs can be offered which were not possible before because enrollment would be too low to sustain any single institution offering them

- *cooperation between institutions in other instructional endeavors would be facilitated

- *instructional development components in the ITV/R courses could serve as modules for campus-based instruction

- *faculty in-service courses, special public interest and community access programming would probably also be aired

- *supplementary materials for campus courses could be broadcast on weekends to reduce travelling and campus contact time for those with limited timetables

- *call-in programs on radio could supplement the televised programs and would operate as community forum, questions for instructors, additional contact with experts, etc.

- *cultural events occurring at member institutions could be covered by broadcast facility for use in other institutions and general audience

- *community generated programming could be organized through member institutions and find an outlet which does not exist in metropolitan area at this time

*off-hours, automatic recording devices could receive materials from the central media library using the broadcast facility as a delivery system

*in-class courses could be broadcast to homes and study centers at other member institutions which allows exchange of faculty expertise.

*simultaneous bilingual courses possible with combination of radio and television

*addition of signing for deaf students to instructional media could be easily added and economical for metropolitan region-- though not necessarily for a single institution

*courses and educational programs for the blind via radio would be feasible for region but not necessarily feasible for one institution

*extension of facilities of informal educational institutions-- often valuable events and programs which are dependent upon in-person attendance and thus limited

*costs of leased courses would be reduced on a per-member basis

*greater bargaining ability for copyrighted materials when large amounts of programming are involved

Disadvantages and limitations

*costs of course presentation via expensive media might require limitation of other services

*faculty resistance to use of mediated courses remains high-- winning their support for LRC activities might become more difficult with highly visible mediated instruction

*advantages of a regional service with broadcast activities are possibly minimal for small institutions

*getting diverse institutions together to plan programming might be more devisive for overall goals of the learning resources service than beneficial

*for some areas, within region, the number of people served would be quite small because of small population or lack of need for alternative learning formats

*the number of quality programs is too low now to justify the involvement and the difficulties of producing new programs are too great for an institution to get involved with

*while radio has a good potential for public service and instructional uses, television would require more manpower and expense than an institution could justify getting into

*some don't buy the argument that broadcast instruction will serve those who are not now being served by campus instruction and thus is a new audience or "market"

*any kind of public service broadcasting on television and/or radio would have the kind of political implications which should be avoided

11. In the real world of budgets, personnel squeezes, and fears of campus enrollment decline, the preceding questions probably take on an air of unreality -- an educational technology fantasy. The purpose was to stir your imagination and allow you to think of what the ideal should be and shouldn't be. Now we can return to the practicalities of designing a regional learning resources service--a service which some would describe as idealistic and others would claim as a coming necessity. The items below are the areas which a regional learning resources service might provide initially to its members. Which are the priority areas for your institution--the ones which you feel are vitally needed to improve the level of instruction and learning? Are there others which are not listed but which have priority in your planning for the future needs of your institution? If you had to decide on one area to start out with, which one would you pick? Which would be un-acceptable for your institution? Why?

*faculty and staff inservice workshops for improving performance

*interinstitutional course development for alternative and open learning

*broadcast services for at-home and other non-campus based students

*instructional research and evaluation services

*media production, exchange, and distribution service (media library)

*centralized purchasing of equipment and software

*clearinghouse function: materials, expertise, innovations, mediated courseware, etc.

*central computer services for management, instruction, research, etc.

*centralized maintenance service for equipment requiring regular servicing and expensive repair

* (your suggestions)

12. Assuming the service was operated on a cooperative arrangement and that your institution was guaranteed services equal to or more than the cost of the annual contribution (either because of economies of scale or matching funds or both), how much would your institution be willing to contribute to such a service as an annual membership fee?

*\$1,000 / \$2,000 / \$5,000 / \$7,500 / \$10,000 / \$12,500 ----?

13. The planning of a sophisticated regional learning resources service can be approached in many ways. The first steps are crucial -- first steps such as planning strategies, first services, funding plans, number of institutions involved. What are your suggestions on the initial steps? Can this, in fact, be a realistic undertaking given vigorous leadership, cooperative planning, and clear analyses of the problems to be solved? Is there a real need for such a service for the Chicago region of Northern Illinois? What information should be collected before proceeding? Do your present duties at your institution preclude your involvement in the planning of a regional learning resources service? What is the next step if you feel this idea should move forward?

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OCT 24 1975

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